

# ADDRESSING THE PRISONER REENTRY CRISIS

## America's Promise: A Second Chance



“This year, some 600,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison....America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.”

-President George W. Bush  
January 2004, State of the Union

An important first step towards addressing the reentry crisis was taken when a bi-partisan group of Members of Congress introduced the Second Chance Act in both the House (H.R. 1704) and the Senate (S. 1934). The Second Chance Act will reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and help states and communities better address the large numbers of people returning to communities from prisons and jails. The bill focuses on four key areas: jobs, housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and strengthening families.

With your help, the Second Chance Act can pass this year. Call or email your Member of Congress and ask him/her to sponsor reentry legislation and work to see it enacted. For your Congressional Member's contact information visit: [www.congress.com](http://www.congress.com) or call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.

### Stopping Recidivism: The Case for Action

#### Reducing Crime:

- Nearly 650,000 people are released from prison to communities nationwide each year, and even more come back from county jails.
- Today, an estimated two-thirds of men and women leaving prison will be re-arrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within three years of release.
- Such high recidivism rates translate into thousands of new crimes each year, at least half of which can be averted through improved prisoner reentry efforts.

#### Treating Substance Abuse and Mental Health Problems:

- Most people (70-80%) coming home from prison or jail have histories of drug or alcohol dependence.
- It is estimated that as many as 84% were under the influence of drugs/alcohol at the time of the offense.
- An increasing number of offenders have mental health problems.
- Without treatment, relapse is likely.

#### Saving Taxpayer Dollars:

- Significant portions of state and local government budgets are now invested in the criminal justice system.
- Incarceration costs, on average, \$22,650 a year per person, with some states spending as much as \$44,000.
- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, expenditures on corrections alone increased from \$9 billion in 1982 to \$44 billion in 1997.
- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that, “the best [reentry] programs can be expected to deliver 20% to 30% reductions in recidivism or crime rates” and that “programs that can deliver – at a reasonable program cost – even modest reductions in future criminality can have an attractive economic bottom line.”

#### Strengthening Families and Communities:

- One of the most significant costs of failed reentry and cycling people in and out of prison is the harmful impact on children and communities.
- In 1991, 900,000 children had at least one incarcerated parent; today there are two million kids with at least one incarcerated parent (an increase of more than 100%) and 10 million who have had a parent imprisoned.

# THE SECOND CHANCE ACT (S. 1934, H.R. 1704)

## Reducing Recidivism through Common Sense Solutions

- **Demonstration Grants.** The Second Chance Act reauthorizes the Re-Entry Demonstration project with an enhanced focus on jobs, housing, substance abuse treatment/mental health, and children and families. The bill increases the amount of money to fund demonstration programs and create performance outcomes standards and deliverables.
- **National Offender Re-Entry Resource Center.** Establishes a resource center for states, local government, service providers, faith-based organization, corrections and community organizations to collect and disseminate best practices and provide training and support around reentry.
- **Federal Taskforce.** Creates a federal interagency taskforce to identify programs and resources on re-entry, identify opportunities for collaboration, and develop interagency initiatives and a national re-entry research agenda. The taskforce would review and report to Congress on the federal barriers that exist to successful re-entry with recommendations for overcoming those barriers.
- **Offender Re-Entry Research.** Authorizes the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct research around re-entry.
- **Mentoring Grants to Nonprofit Organizations:** Establishes a grant program to fund nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring and transitional services to adult and juvenile offenders.

### The Second Chance Act is supported by a broad based group of national organizations, including:

<p>American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry            American Bar Association            American Catholic Correctional Chaplains Association            American Center for Law and Justice            American Conservative Union            American Correctional Association            American Correctional Chaplains Association            American Counseling Association            American Jail Association            American Probation and Parole Association            American Psychological Association            The Arc of the United States            Association for Better Living and Education            Association of Citizens for Social Reform            Association of State Correctional Administrators            Big Brothers Big Sisters of America            BOP Watch            Catholic Charities USA            Center for Community Alternatives            Center for Law and Social Policy            Center for Public Justice            Center for Youth as Resources            Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice            Child Welfare League of America            Children's Defense Fund            Christian Coalition            Church Women United            Coalition for Juvenile Justice            Corporation for Supportive Housing            Correctional Education Association            Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators            Covenant House            Criminon International            Evangelical Lutheran Church in America            Family Justice            Family Research Council            Federal Prison Policy Project            Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health            Fight Crime: Invest in Kids            Goodwill Industries International            Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights            Horizon Faith-based Communities in Prisons</p>	<p>Idaho Department of Correction            International Association of Reentry            International Community Corrections Association            Jewish Prisoner Services International            Johnson Institute            Justice Fellowship            Justice Watch, Inc.            Kids First Coalition            Leadership Conference on Civil Rights            Learning Disabilities Association of America            Legal Action Center            Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC)            Lutheran Services of America            Marion County Reentry Court, Indianapolis, IN            Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office            Montgomery County (MD) Department of Correction and Rehabilitation            NAACP Legal Defense &amp; Educational Fund, Inc.            National AIDS Housing Coalition            National Alliance for the Mentally Ill            National Alliance of Faith and Justice            National Alliance to End Homelessness            National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice            National Association for Children of Alcoholics            National Association for Children's Behavioral Health            National Association of Counties            National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems            National Association of School Psychology            National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors            National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors            National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL)            National Black Church Taskforce Initiative on Crime and Criminal Justice            National Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE)            National Coalition of Full Opportunity for Felons (NCFOF)            National Committee on Community Corrections            National Correctional Industries Association            National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare</p>	<p>National Council of La Raza            National HIRE Network            National Independent Living Association            National Law Center on Homelessness &amp; Poverty            National Low Income Housing Coalition            National Network for Youth            National Re-Entry Resource Center            National Religious Affairs Association            National TASC            National Transitional Jobs Network            National Urban League            New York City Departments of Correction and Probation            Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction            Physicians for Human Rights            Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)            Positive Resistance, Inc.            Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office            Prevent Child Abuse America            Prison Fellowship            Prison Ministry and Criminal Justice Commission of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.            Prisons Foundation            Public/Private Ventures            Rebecca Project for Human Rights            The Safer Foundation            The Salvation Army            Samaritan Village            School Social Work Association of America            The Sentencing Project            SHAR, Inc.            State Associations of Addiction Services (SAAS)            Stay'n Out and Serendipity Programs            Students for Sensible Drug Policy            Therapeutic Communities of America            United Cerebral Palsy            United Church of Christ/Justice &amp; Witness Ministries            United States Conference of Catholic Bishops            United States Conference of Mayors            UrbaneKnights, Inc.            Volunteers of America            Women of Reform Judaism            Youth Law Center</p>
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